THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI V. DHANANJAY KUMAR): (a) No such report of suicide by the cotton growers in the State of Andhra Pradesh has been received in this Ministry.

(b) The cotton EXIM Policy has been framed keeping in view the interests of cotton growers as well as the user industry which provides a price stabilization mechanism. Government announces quota for exports of cotton in the beginning of every cotton year. Imports of cotton is under OGL to facilitate the availability of cotton of desired quality parameters. Largely, export and import of cotton depend on quality, price and other considerations. The Minimum Support Price (MSP) is also in vogue to ensure reasonable returns to the cotton growers. Technology Mission on Cotton is under operation to incentivise the research and development, dissemination of technology to cotton farmers, improvement in market infrastructure and modernisation of ginning & pressing sector for overall increase in the productivity and quality of cotton while ensuring better returns to the cotton growers and availability of better quality of cotton to the industry.

Ambedkar Handicraft Development Scheme

†4381. PROF. R.B.S. VARMA: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have started an "Ambedkar Handicraft Development Scheme";

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what are the main objectives of this scheme; and

(d) the amount allocated for implementation of this scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI V. DHANANJAY KUMAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. 'The Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana' has recently been launched which aims at promoting Indian handicrafts

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

by developing artisan clusters into professionally managed and self-reliant community enterprises on the principles of effective member participation and mutual cooperation. The thrust of the scheme is on a projectised need based integrated approach for sustainable handicrafts development through participation of craft persons leading to their empowerment.

(c) The main objectives of the scheme are:

(i) To organize artisan clusters into Self Help Groups (SHGs); or Cooperative Societies with a view to enabling them to take up economic activity for sustainable development through a collective mode.

(ii) To empower artisans by making them active entrepreneurs-cum-primary stake holders in the process of development and bringing them to a visible platform for easy access to domestic and overseas markets.

(iii) To upgrade artisans' skill through appropriate design & technology intervention to enable them to use quality raw material, tools and equipments to produce value-added items.

(iv) To provide adequate infrastructure support for improved quality and productivity and to enable artisans access to larger market segment, both domestic and international.

(v) To ensure effective collective participation of all members involved in production and marketing process for optimal growth in human resource, production, business and income.

(vi) To create centres of excellence (based on the philosophy of Collective Enterprises) with well integrated linkages.

(d) A sum of Rs. 8.90 crores has been allocated during their current financial year *i.e.* 2001-2002 for implementation of the above scheme.